Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

EXCLUSIVE TO
EXTENSION EDITORS
in All States

United States Department of Agriculture

POTATOES CAN'T TAKE IT!

In at least one potato production area of the United States, external damage to potatoes nearly doubles between country shipping point and the retail store. This happened to potatoes produced on Long Island, N. Y., and shipped the relatively short distance to New York City and vicinity, according to a study made by the Production and Marketing Administration of the USDA in cooperation with the Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station.

More than 350 potato samples were followed from Long Island shipping points to wholesale and retail stores in and around New York City. Here's what was found: External damage was 7.8 percent by weight at shipping point, 11.7 percent at the wholesale level, and 13.4 percent at retail stores. Nearly all of the increase in damage apparently was caused by rough handling on the way to market.

The findings clearly point to the need for more careful handling at every step in the production and marketing process--harvesting, grading, packing, loading, unloading, and shipping, and in displaying potatoes in retail stores.

Since U. S. grades for wholesale trading permit only 6 percent external damage in potatoes graded as U. S. No. 1, shippers are urged to supervise grading and packing more closely so that defects do not disqualify the potatoes for the grade claimed. And, in order that the benefit from proper grading practices may carry through to the consumer, it appears that all persons engaged in distribution of potatoes must do a more careful job of handling.

A copy of the report on this study can be obtained by writing to the Office of Information Services, PMA, USDA, Washington 25, D. C. Ask for "Deterioration of Long Island Potatoes in Marketing Channels."

RY
MAY [illegible] 1932
U.S. D TURE

serve
9
, 31 We

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE
United States Department of Agriculture
EXCLUSIVE TO EXTENSION EDITORS
In All States

A NEW MACHINE FOR PREPACKAGING APPLES

With the help of a newly developed device for putting apples into consumer-size packages, the prepackaging can be done from 50 to 100 percent faster than bagging apples by hand, and labor costs for prepackaging are cut almost in half.

The new device consists primarily of a chute into which the apples flow automatically. The operator slips the transparent plastic bag over the chute, tilts the chute, and the apples slide rather than drop into the bag. It was worked out by the Washington State Apple Advertising Commission, under a contract with the U. S. Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Agricultural Experiment Station, State College of Washington.

When the device is used to prepackage apples in 4-pound plain transparent film bags, the cost of marketing the fruit can be reduced below the cost of marketing it in the conventional standard apple box. Although the film bags are an added expense to the apple packer, offsetting savings were found in reduced retailing spoilage losses, and less retail labor expense.

The more important features of the new device are that it reduces manpower requirements, speeds up prepackaging operations, and holds bruising of the apples to a minimum. All the facts about it are summed up in a report called "Prepackaging Apples at Point of Production" (AI-29), issued by the Production and Marketing Administration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

(Over)

USDA 326 (3(2-51)

The report also contains these findings about marketing prepackaged apples:

Retail labor costs for selling prepackaged apples are less than half as much as for selling them in bulk.

Consumers use half as much time in selecting prepackaged apples, which means that more customers can be served per hour.

Average retailer spoilage and mark-down losses are heavier on bulk than on prepackaged apples of comparable quality. No tests were carried out, however, to determine how long the apples would keep well in the film bags.

Generally speaking, 3- and 4-pound bags of apples move in larger volume than 5-pound bags when sold at the same price per pound.

Sales of prepackaged apples were found to be 200 percent of bulk sales in two Chicago stores; 228 percent of bulk in three Kansas City stores; but only 60 percent of bulk in three Los Angeles stores.

Based on 4,500 responses, a consumer acceptance survey of buyers of prepackaged apples indicates that 98 percent of them would prefer to buy more apples that way.

FEB 28 1951

USDA NEEDS MORE TWIN CALVES

Identical twin calves--normally only 6 percent of all twin beef calves--may help find the best answers to economy of production and market quality of finished animals. The questions that need answers are: (1) What happens to growing beef calves when they are forced to subsist on scanty rations such as they get on the range during a severe drought? (2) How efficiently can growing animals make up, after adequate rations become available, for the weight they failed to gain when feed was scarce? (3) How will the meat and hides of cattle maintained for months on scanty rations compare with those of animals fed adequate rations throughout their period of growth?

Scientists here and in other countries have been handicapped in their search for the answers because of the cost of using a large number of experimental animals. But now come the twin calves to aid the researchers. At the Department of Agriculture's Research Center near Beltsville, nutrition men are attacking the problem with only one-twentieth the number of animals as are required by the former methods.

The new method is based on the theory that both members of a pair of identical twins have exactly the same inherited characteristics. Therefore any difference in weight or size when each is fed a different ration will be due to the feed and not due to a difference in any inherited tendency to grow.

Last year, the Bureau of Animal Industry purchased 6 pairs of identical twin beef calves, and these were placed on experimental rations for 6 months, starting when they were about 6 months old. Now the scientists are looking for additional pairs of identical twins to be placed on experimental rations when 3 months old.

Identical twins may be distinguished from other twins by a careful comparison of the physical characteristics of the two pair-mates. Identical twins are always of the same sex and, in general, the following characteristics are similar in both members of the pair: Color, color pattern; general body conformation; height at withers; set of legs, rump, and head; size, shape, and color of eyes; diameter and length of tail and brush; hair pattern; location and direction of hair whorls; birth weight; and rate of growth.

But scientists estimate that less than 4,000 identical twin beef calves will be born in the United States this year. There will be about 60,736 twin calves, but only 6.5 percent of these (3,950) will be identical twins. That is why there has been difficulty in getting enough identical twin calves to carry on the feeding investigations.

People who have twin calves in their herd that are both males carrying at least one-half beef blood are requested to write to Dr. C. F. Winchester, Bureau of Animal Industry, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Beltsville, Md., at their earliest convenience after the calves are born. The Bureau pays better than market prices for all identical twin calves that are accepted.

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

United States Department of Agriculture

EXCLUSIVE TO
EXTENSION EDITORS

To S.D., Nebr., Kans.,
Minn., Iowa, and Mo.

USDA PUBLICATIONS HELP ANSWER SOFT CORN PROBLEMS

Many of the soft corn problems facing farmers in States west of the Mississippi River this fall are answered in two U. S. Department of Agriculture publications which have been prepared by research engineers of the Department. "Handling and Storing Soft Corn on the Farm," Farmers' Bulletin 1976, discusses methods of reducing damage of soft corn to be stored in cribs, and Circular 839, "Mechanical Drying of Corn on the Farm," tells how corn can be dried with both heated and unheated forced air.

The engineers recommend that wet corn to be cribbed without benefit of artificial drying, be harvested late to allow as much drying in the field as possible. Harvesting after temperatures become lower also retards or prevents mold development during the winter.

Soft corn should be picked as clean as possible, and green ears, shelled corn, and dirt should be kept out of the cribs. Cribs equipped with ventilators and located in the open away from trees and other buildings will allow as much natural air as possible to pass through the corn. A tight floor and good drainage are necessary in a crib to protect the corn from ground moisture penetration.

Width of crib is also an important factor in drying corn. Research has proved that six- and seven-foot widths are the maximum recommended for eastern South Dakota, southern Minnesota, and northern Iowa. Farmers in southern areas can safely use wider cribs provided ventilators are installed in seasons when the corn is wetter than usual. Eight feet is the maximum for the most of Iowa and Missouri, while nine- and ten-foot width cribs can be used in eastern Nebraska and Kansas.

Drying soft corn with forced air can be handled throughout this area generally with a properly rigged crib and a fan large enough to supply required amounts of air to the corn in the crib. Forcing unheated air through ear corn with 30 percent moisture content will dry it to safe storage moisture (20 percent) within 500 to 1,000 hours under early fall humidity and temperature conditions.

Using heated air dries corn faster, and is necessary if there are large quantities to be dried with limited storage space.

Farmers may find it advisable, the engineers state, to store their soft corn in suitable cribs late this fall and then dry it with forced air driers early next spring.

Farmers' Bulletin 1976 and Circular 839 contain complete information concerning soft corn handling, and both are available from the Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C.